



PUBLISH A BOOK ONLINE

You've dreamed of being on the bestsellers list and you're sure there's a market for your book, but publishers won't give you the time of day. Jon Thompson explains how easy it is to put your work online, so you can publish without being damned

They say everyone has at least one book inside them. As most first-time writers will tell you, though, it is virtually impossible to find a publisher who is willing to give you a chance.

So what if you truly believe your novel is worth publishing and you're convinced that there is an audience for your work out there? Until now, your only option was a costly one. You would have to spend your own money having your book privately printed, which would leave you out of pocket. Furthermore, few bookshops would be willing to stock self-published books, and publishers turn their noses up at them.

Two things have changed this: the internet, and more flexible printing technology. These two factors have resulted in a new publishing revolution: print on demand (POD). Thanks to these online services, you can have copies of your book printed only as and when orders are placed, in the same amount of time it takes to receive a book from Amazon, and your book may even have its own ISBN number. POD is also a risk-free way for publishers to see if there is a market for a writer's work.

For Northumbrian author Slim Palmer, even finding someone to approach publishers on his behalf proved fruitless. He explained: "I have

tried in the last year to secure an agent who can do all that running around for me. So far, no luck. [I was told by one of them that] the entry level for a new novelist in the UK is special, not good." Despite that setback, Palmer decided to persevere through online publishing. This proved more successful. His third book even received a nomination in the literary prize awards run on Lulu.com, the biggest POD site.

NOVEL APPROACHES

POD is straightforward. You write and format the manuscript for your book, open an account at a POD website and upload your work. You then make your work publicly available on the site, via a customisable storefront. Visitors to the site can browse the titles on offer and search by category or keyword. For the first-time author, there is no financial risk, no rejection to deal with and no expensive stock to buy.

When someone orders your book, the POD site handles the purchase, takes a small cut of the proceeds to cover its costs, prints and binds a copy of the book, and sends it directly to the buyer. Lulu.com takes a straight 20 per cent of the price you set for the book. CaféPress.com charges a base price, which depends on the binding and number of pages used. For instance, a book that is perfect bound (the type normally

used for paperbacks) costs a flat \$7 (around £3.50) to bind, plus three cents per page used. This works out to \$10 (around £5) for a 100-page book. Your profit is whatever you charge above this base price, and the site will calculate this. Neither site charges any upfront fees, although some smaller publishers do.

The POD site prints and binds books on professional, automated machines, so they always look and feel like professional products. The printing equipment sees a long queue of jobs and instantly reconfigures itself to reflect desired size and binding options. This ease of use has opened publishing to a wide variety of people who are keen to get into print.

Not everyone wants fame and fortune; just seeing their name in print is enough. For these authors, POD is ideal. Susannah McLean had wanted to be a writer ever since she was a young girl. However, in trying to get published, the paradoxical nature of the publishing world soon became apparent to her. "Not a single publishing company would have me," admitted McLean. "They said it was because I was a first-time author." McLean then turned to POD. "It was perfect," she enthused.

"I finished the final draft of my manuscript a few weeks ago and ordered a few copies of my book, *Flower of the Titanic*. They were at my

**Stand and deliver** Understanding delivery times

Delivery times are a big factor when people decide to buy anything online, especially books. Because of this, it pays to think about how long it will take to deliver your work to those who want to buy it.

Always try to use a POD site in the country where you believe your market lies. If you're producing a series of guides to local history, for instance, your customers are likely to be local, too. Producing your book usually takes a couple of days, after which delivery should be no more than a couple of days extra. Transatlantic parcels may well take over two weeks to deliver in Europe, however.

Some sites such as Lulu.com also allow you to offer e-book downloads of your work, which obviously bypass the usual delivery times completely. If you're selling information rather than stories, this could be a very profitable option. Buyers of how-to books tend to want to get started as soon as possible, and instant downloads might clinch you some extra sales.

You can use a number of POD services in different countries to print your book, thereby making delivery times local to each market. On each store front, you can have links to the other sites so customers can select the site that will deliver the quickest.

door in about a week. I was thrilled." With sales starting to trickle in, McLean is hopeful this will prove to publishers that her work is saleable. If not, at least she still has that all-important printed book with her name on it.

Others have found ways of integrating POD into their businesses. Writer and publisher Julie Ann Dawson explained: "I run a small indie press [called] Bards and Sages. Much of what I do is in the print RPG (role-playing game) industry, which is a small niche market in the hobby industry. Print-on-demand services allow me to make products available to our niche market without having to waste money on large inventories."

Dawson's POD site storefront also acts as a creative focal point. "Many RPG designers have joined with our company to launch Power Word: Print, which uses the storefront to serve as a one-stop portal to help gamers find print versions of their favourite games without having to hunt at a dozen different sites," she said.

Other POD users do not measure success financially but instead in terms of the satisfaction it brings them. "Success for me is creating original, moving and inspiring books for children," said Maggie Pagratis, owner of Athse Publishing, which uses POD as an alternative to traditional printing methods. "I am a teacher by profession, and value words, sharing knowledge and inspiration."

Her idea was to write books that would help children through difficult times and use the profits to further help disadvantaged children the world over via charitable donations. In order to do this, she set up Athse Publishing. Unfortunately, her efforts met with indifference. "I had put up the book *Go Away Booboo* on eBay auctions for charities, and not a single copy was bought," said Pagratis. "I wanted to use this book to help make pain go away, and decided not to give up and do it myself."

Selling books directly and using POD to print them proved a better approach. For Pagratis, POD was the springboard that gave her the success she wanted. "We intend on growing, perhaps not only using POD technologies. This is a stepping stone. Ninety-five per cent of the work we've done (over 40 books) has been accomplished in the last 10 months."

My own success story is different again. Last November, I released a short book about what I thought was an obscure area of card magic. I published it on a POD site, expecting to sell a dozen copies. I paid for a little advert on a magic

forum to promote it, and the expected handful of people bought a copy.

Then something unexpected happened. One buyer wrote a glowing review of my book for a magic website. Almost immediately, a company specialising in instructional DVDs for magicians noticed it and wanted to bring it to a wider audience. We shot the DVD of the book in Newbury over two days in March. If it hadn't been for POD, there'd be no book in the first place and no subsequent DVD, either.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

Even while you are writing your masterpiece, you should be giving some thought to selecting a POD service to host and publish your finished work. It's important to do this early, because not all providers offer the same services or even sizes of printed book. You might format your manuscript and then find a site that's ideal for you, only to realise that you need to format your manuscript differently. See our 'Online resources explained' box on page 136 for the main POD services available.

There are other considerations. People like to be sure of what they're buying, so how do you get them to pay for a book by an unknown author? One way is to use a POD site that allows you to create a preview of your work, perhaps the first chapter, to hook them into the story. Lulu.com lets you do this. From the author's perspective, payment terms are very important. Some sites send you a cheque when your sales account hits a certain threshold. Others transfer funds to your bank or PayPal account at the end of each month. If you live several miles away from the nearest bank, however, paying in cheques could become a chore.

If you use a foreign POD site that sends your revenue in the form of a cheque, your bank will

charge you a handling fee for processing it. This could be as high as 10 per cent of the cheque's value. Exchange rates influence the value of the payment. Depending on your bank, the forms used for paying in foreign cheques can be surprisingly complex. The one I filled in at Barclays had the counter clerk and his supervisor scratching their heads.

The account management facilities that are offered by a POD site are also important. Being able to see at a glance how your sales are progressing is interesting, but it can also tell you how successful you are, as can statistics about page hits and overall rankings. It's also useful to be able to swap in a new version of your manuscript just in case you find an error.

If you do run into problems, the best sources of help are other users of the site. Look for sites with a large, friendly and active forum community. They'll be able to help you with tips and dodges they've discovered. A few sites, such as CaféPress.com, also give you an easy way of designing and selling items such as mugs and T-shirts. This gives you scope for creating a range of merchandising linked to your books. If someone has enjoyed reading about a character with a memorable catchphrase, he or she might also be tempted to buy a mug or T-shirt emblazoned with it.

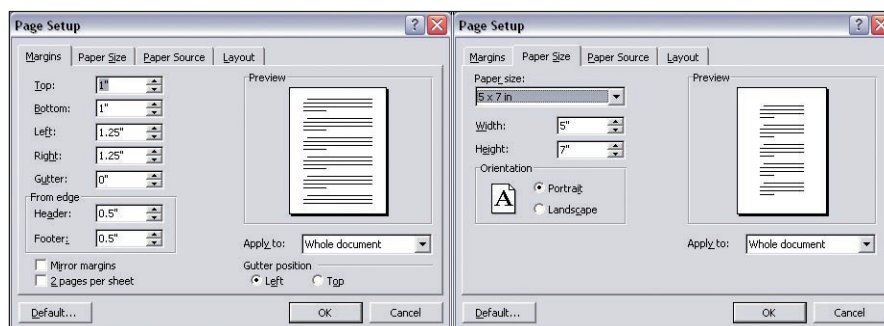
GETTING INTO SHAPE

Once you're happy with the text of your book and choice of POD site, you'll need to put it into the format that will appear on the printed page. This process can be frustrating if you don't know what you need to achieve.

The main text of most books uses justified margins as opposed to leaving the text ragged at the right-hand end of each line. If you haven't done so, modify the style you used for the main body text (usually the 'normal' or 'body text' styles) and ensure the style you've used always formats paragraphs in this way. Microsoft Word has a habit of changing the style of your text without telling you, so it's best to go through the document to make sure it's consistent.

Next, you need to decide on the physical width and height of book you want to produce, based on the sizes your choice of publisher can print. The average bookshelf contains books in a bewildering array of sizes. The 'Common book sizes' box on page 136 gives standard dimensions and their modern names. When trying to decide which is right for you, you should measure some of the books you own. This will give you an idea of how yours might look.

You'll also have to consider margins. Having smaller ones might reduce your page count and therefore the amount that the POD site charges for printing, but it could also mean that readers



▲ You'll find the Margins and Paper Size options in the File, Page Setup menu in Word



struggle to read the ends of lines closest to the book's spine. Leave at least half an inch of space from the left and right margins to compensate, and more if your book is particularly long, as the binding will then take up more of the page.

To adjust the paper size and margins of your manuscript, in Microsoft Word, go to the File menu and select Page Size. The first tab lets you set both the margins and the amount of space at the top and bottom of the page. Click on the Paper Size tab, and either use the selection of standard sizes or enter your own. Make sure the 'Apply to' option is set to Entire Document before pressing the OK button.

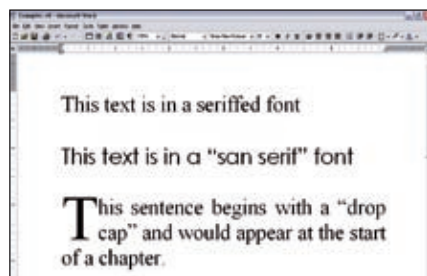
FONT OF KNOWLEDGE

Fonts are the most visible aspect of the formatting process. The publishing world divides these into serif and sans serif fonts. It's usual to use serif fonts in books where there are long tracts of text, such as a novel. These fonts tend to be easier to read.

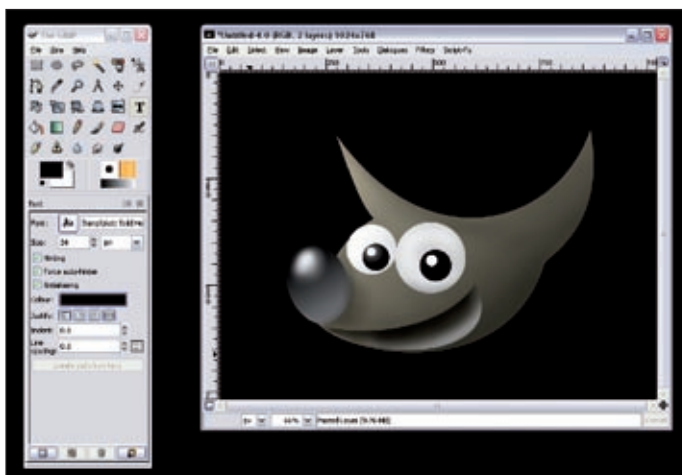
Consider font size carefully. The usual default size is 12 point, but the font you decide to use might look larger than usual. The serif font Bookman Old Style is a good example of this. At 12 point, it is larger on the page than the similarly sized Times New Roman. Because the number of pages partly governs the cost of your book, dropping the font size slightly (by just one point) can sometimes reduce the overall length by several pages. The longer the manuscript is, the more pronounced this shortening effect will be. Don't reduce the font size too far, though, or you may end up with complaints that the text is too small to read easily. As a general rule, the font should be big enough to allow each page to carry around 30 lines of text.

ART OF THE MATTER

One aspect of creating a book that many POD authors shy away from until the last moment is the artwork. This includes images that appear



▲ Consider the size and type of font carefully and make sure it is styled consistently throughout



◀ If you don't have access to a professional image-manipulation program such as Photoshop, the open-source free GIMP is a good alternative

in the text as well as on the cover. An enticing design can help attract potential readers, and if you have an artistic eye, it is a great opportunity to be creative. Different POD sites insist on different image sizes for the covers, so check how much space you have available before you start, or you may find the outer regions of your cover art missing on the printed cover.

Digitise any pictures you draw or paint at the highest resolution and number of colours that your hardware will handle. Also remember to save your pictures in a format that doesn't lose quality every time you save them. Avoid the JPG format at all costs, and instead save your image in TIFF, PNG or BMP format, as required by the POD site.

To include images and diagrams in your manuscript, in Microsoft Word you place your cursor at the insertion point, select the Picture option on the Insert menu and select the From File sub-option. Once inserted, you can resize and justify the image as you would any other graphic, by selecting it and stretching the frame.

If you don't have access to a professional image-manipulation package such as Adobe Photoshop, there are free alternatives. One is the open-source GNU Image Manipulation Program, also known as GIMP. Supplied as standard with Linux and designed as a substitute for Photoshop, GIMP is also available for Windows in an easily installed executable package.

If you do decide to use GIMP on Windows, you'll first need to download and install the associated GTK+ 2 graphics library, which you'll find on the same download page (you'll find the GIMP and the GTK+ library on the cover DVD). Download this first, then

open its compressed folder, double-click on the executable and install it by accepting the defaults. Now install GIMP, again accepting the defaults. Run the program for the first time, and it'll ask you to confirm a few things about working directories and cache sizes. You can simply accept the defaults again.

One very useful service GIMP provides is that of balancing colours and adjusting the brightness and contrast of photographs. If your POD publisher prints only black and white images within books, then you will need to pay attention to the contrast and brightness of each to ensure you bring out as much detail as possible.

To adjust these settings, open the picture in GIMP, click on the Layer menu and select the Colours option. This in turn gives options for setting colour balance, contrast and brightness. A further submenu called Auto contains options that will attempt the adjustments for you.

One graphic you might need to provide but which many POD authors overlook is the spine of the book. This contains the name of the book and the author so that people can find it on a bookshelf. Each POD publisher seems to have its own way of letting you create the spine. Some have you submit it as a graphic, while others have an online tool for creating them.

DOING THE SPLITS

The next task is to split the manuscript into sections. This is so each section can be formatted individually. The way you format the sections has a lot to do with publishing tradition. For instance, page numbers start on page one of chapter one, even though this is usually around

Learning the lingo Common publishing jargon

Publishing has developed its own jargon, which can be confusing for the first time print-on-demand user. Here's a list of the terms you're likely to encounter, along with their meanings:

Copy The text of your book.

Bleed An area of an image lying outside the trim size. In designing your cover, you should ensure you use the image size stipulated by the POD site – otherwise, important parts of it may end up in the bleed.

Drop cap A large capital letter usually used as the first letter of each chapter.

GSM Grams per square metre. This is a measure of the thickness of paper. 80 GSM is regular printer paper, for instance, while 100 GSM is slightly thicker.

Gutter The inner margins of the book.

Perfect bound A book in which the pages are glued in a block against the spine. Most paperbacks are perfect bound.

Plasticcoil Like a notebook, the pages in Plasticcoil-bound books have holes in their pages near the spine, through which runs a coil of plastic to hold them together. A similar binding is called Wire-O.

Point In modern publishing, there are 72 points to an inch. A character in 72-point will span an inch on the printed page, whereas a character in 12-point will measure a sixth of an inch.

PPI Pages per inch. A measurement of the thickness of the paper.

Saddle stitch A method of binding thin books and pamphlets by stapling pages to the cover at the spine.

Trim size The area of an image that fits on to the page or cover. The part lying outside the trim size is the bleed.



page 13. Splitting the book into sections will enable you to make these changes.

In Microsoft Word, go to the Insert menu and select Break. The resulting window gives you several options for page, line and section breaks. Select the Next Page option and Word will insert a page break, starting the new section directly after it. You can see which section your cursor is in from the status bar at the bottom of the word processor, next to the page number.

Place the cursor somewhere in section two and select Headers and Footers from the View menu. You'll see that the option 'Same as previous' is selected in the dialog box that pops up. Deselect this, and Word will format section two independently of section one. You can now safely add page numbers to section two and any formatting you want to section one, safe in the knowledge that the changes will remain local to their respective sections.

Section one of your manuscript usually carries a title page, a copyright notice, a biography of you, the author, a list of other titles you've written, a copyright notice, a dedication, and possibly a table of contents. If you open any book, you'll see that the first page of section one is always on the right-hand side of the open book. Similarly, the first page of each chapter always starts on a right-hand page. This convention makes the book easier to read, but to achieve it you may need to insert blank pages into your manuscript.

If you include one, the table of contents starts on a right-hand page, too, and usually appears at the end of the first section. To create a table of contents in Microsoft Word, read our *How To...* on page 143. Remember that if you make changes to your manuscript then you should right-click the table of contents and update the field to reflect any changes in headings or page numbers.

GOING PORTABLE

Most POD sites demand that you supply your finished manuscript in Adobe's portable document format (PDF). Microsoft Word 2007 is the only version that generates PDF files. Fortunately, you don't need to spend money on

expensive software that you may need only a few times. You can just use OpenOffice 2.0 from OpenOffice.org.

This free replacement for the complete Microsoft Office suite allows you to export your manuscript to PDF for proofreading and upload. It also gives you some control over what people can do with the generated files. You can, for instance, prevent people printing out your work or copying and pasting the text, which is useful if you want to pass documents around among strangers as well as friends and you want to restrict the access they have to your work.

To generate a PDF, open your manuscript in OpenOffice Writer and select Export to PDF from the File menu. Enter a name for the file. A dialog box will pop up giving you control over the generation process. Make sure that you select 'lossless' compression rather than JPG for your embedded images, or they may appear slightly blurred in places. Then press Export and, if you have Adobe Reader installed, double-click on the resulting file so you can check the formatting.

It is important that you read your generated PDF carefully and in its entirety in order to ensure that all aspects of the content are exactly as you want them. You may encounter problems with tables, for example. OpenOffice Writer does not always put all the lines around the cells, especially if you have formatted the table to use several columns on the page. Ensure that you can see the frames properly in the original and the PDF should be OK. Once you are happy with the file onscreen, print it out and check it again. Seeing it in another format can sometimes highlight any subtle errors you have missed onscreen.

The only drawback to using OpenOffice to write and format your book rather than Word is that the full download is currently over 90MB. However, you will find the program in the Expert Toolkit section on the cover DVD.

MARKETING STRATEGIES

So what do you do once you've uploaded your masterpiece? To boost sales, some authors like to order their books in small batches and sell

Size spies Common book sizes

When planning your book, it is sensible to think about the size it will be. However, there are a bewildering number of different sizes to choose from, many with obscure names. Here's a list of book sizes available at the most popular POD sites:

NAME	SIZE (INCHES)
Pocket	6.875x4.25
Standard paperback	8x5
Royal	9.21x6.14
Comic book	10.25x6.625
Novel	9x6
Crown quarto	9.68x7.44
Square	7.5x7.5
Technical manual	9.25x7.5
A4	11.69x8.27
Larger square	8.5x8.5

Luckily, most POD sites also have free document templates that you can download and which already have the right page size and margins set up for you.

them personally. One is Kenneth Campbell, author of *The Fifth Category*. "I got [the manuscript] into final form in November 2005 and have been marketing ever since," said Campbell. "I count as one of my successes a signing at a local winery. I managed to sell about 20 books to strangers. Since then I've had more signings, I've noticed Amazon sales starting to register and the book is in several bricks-and-mortar stores in North and South Carolina."

Various POD sites offer a service whereby they'll assign your book an ISBN number and give it a listing on Amazon. For some authors, this can be the difference between being an enthusiastic amateur and becoming a professional writer. Your chosen POD site will have details of how to buy an ISBN from them and any restrictions this places on your work, such as the changes you can make. Prices for ISBNs vary, however. Lulu.com, for example, charges \$99 (around £50) whereas OpenMute.org charges only \$20 (around £10). However, the latter is a much smaller publisher which also charges an upfront £150 publishing consultation fee. So it pays to calculate the total price of getting into print before making a final decision.

ISBN and distribution deals can also work if you know a market exists for your work and all you need is to make it available. New Zealand poet Faye Kilday is one author who was let down by a publisher only for POD to come to her rescue. "This put me off approaching other publishers, but I knew that people love my poems and that there's an international market for my work," she said. "I haven't sold any books through my Lulu storefront. All my sales have been from Amazon and other retail channels Lulu provides with global distribution."

So it's not only possible to get into print, but also to find yourself on sites such as Amazon, selling books and being listed alongside the likes of Dan Brown and JK Rowling. But just as in other areas of creative endeavour, the ideas and hard work still come first. US sportswriter Red Smith summed it up eloquently: "Writing is easy. All you do is sit at the typewriter until drops of blood appear on your forehead." **CS**

Services included Online resources explained

POD WEBSITES

CaféPress (www.cafepress.com) lets you design a wide range of merchandise as well as books, charging a small fee from the price of the works you sell. Lulu.com (www.lulu.com) also lets you publish your own music CDs. Like CaféPress, it takes a small cut of the price you charge from each product you sell. Book Surge (www.booksurge.com), owned by Amazon.com, charges authors from \$99 (around £50) for its publishing services, but also provides you with access to leading retail and wholesale channels.

POD WEBSITES

Adobe's online PDF generation service (<http://createpdf.adobe.com>) costs \$9.99 (around £5) per month, but also allows a free trial to generate up to five files.

OpenOffice (<http://download.openoffice.org>), the free suite of office programs, lets you export your manuscript directly into PDF.

IMAGE MANIPULATION

GNU Image Manipulation Program (commonly known as GIMP) makes a fine free substitute for Adobe's industry-standard Photoshop (<http://gimp-win.sourceforge.net>). Download both GIMP for Windows and the GTK+ 2 runtime environment package. Install GTK+ first. This is a port of the GIMP graphics library.



▲ Get some help with the design of your book at www.cafepress.com